

December 15, 1999

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STATES REPORT ON PROGRESS OF PLANS FOR REGIONWIDE TEST OF US WEST'S OPERATIONAL SUPPORT SYTEMS

Initial organizational and planning activities are well under way in preparation for the regionwide independent third-party testing of US West Communications' operational support systems that will be conducted by public utility commissions in 13 of the 14 states served by US West.

Operational support systems, termed OSS, are the systems a telephone company uses to provide service to its customers, whether these are its own retail customers or competing telephone companies. OSS functions which US West must provide at the same level to its competitors as it provides to itself are pre-ordering, ordering, provisioning, repair and maintenance, and billing.

The collaborative group recently achieved two important milestones. First, US West has executed contracts with Maxim Telecom Consulting Group and the National Regulatory Research Institute, consultants that were selected by the states to assist them as project manager and administrative coordinator, respectively.

Second, representatives from the states, competitive local service providers and US West participated in a workshop December 2 and 3 in St. Paul, Minn., to develop the principles and scope of the test. The 20 principles that were agreed upon will be used to define the test and draft a master test plan to be used by the independent third-party tester who will be selected by the states to conduct the test.

Two more workshops are planned for early next year -- one to develop performance measurements to be used during the test of U S West's systems and one to develop the master test plan.

"These milestones reflect both the constructive approach and substantive progress we envision for this project. They are the first stage in drafting a master test plan that will fairly and comprehensively test the ability of U S West to provide nondiscriminatory access to its operational support systems," according to Bob Rowe, Montana Public Service Commissioner, who chairs the Executive Committee for the OSS Collaborative. He said, "These are the critical steps to bringing competition to consumers throughout the US West region, and in turn allowing US West to provide in-region long distance service."

The state utility commissions will plan and conduct the third-party testing to ensure US West offers systems that work to its competitors for local phone service and to enable US West to earn earlier approval to offer full long-distance services in its region under Section 271 of the federal Telecommunications Act. States involved in the project are: Montana, Idaho, Utah, Washington, Oregon, New Mexico, Colorado, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Iowa and Nebraska.

Comprehensive information regarding the OSS testing project can be found at the project's Internet website:
<http://www.nrri.ohio-state.edu/oss.htm>.

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